

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Quality Croutons, Inc.

Chicago Manufacturing Center

Lean Helps Quality Croutons Transform Itself

Client Profile:

Quality Croutons is a packager of dried foods, specifically croutons and bread stuffings. The Chicago-based company began as a 'niche of a niche' in 1987, manufacturing single portion size croutons for one customer, McDonalds. Today Quality Croutons boasts 55 employees and \$12 million in annual sales.

Situation:

Quality Croutons President, David Moore, was concerned because each employee had their personal version of how to make croutons. The result was inconsistent internal processes. "One day would be good but by the next day we had slipped back," explains Moore. He yearned to benchmark his firm against its competitors to better evaluate, update and modernize Quality Croutons. Moore decided Quality Croutons needed help from the outside and turned to the Chicago Manufacturing Center (CMC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

CMC began its 360vu engagement with an enterprise-wide assessment that confirmed Moore's intuition: internal processes were flawed. The CMC team began the company's transformation slowly with a series of engineering studies and exposing the employees to the principles of lean.

Results:

- * Achieved a more competitive and profitable position.
- * Reduced paperwork by 50 percent.
- * Reduced lead time from 8 days to 3 days.
- * Improved management of finished goods and raw materials.
- * Reduced changeover time to less than 25 minutes.
- * Improved quality of product.
- * Increased sales by 40 percent.
- * Increased opportunity to open a new facility.
- * Improved employee willingness to accept change.

Testimonial:

"The team from CMC was very skillful, mindful and able to take the fear of change away from the employees. They could transition people to a more productive thought process."

David Moore, President